

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A bidding system that receives bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and that receives information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

bidding information receiving means for receiving bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices; and

fee calculating means for calculating a fee based on the bidding price range information received by the bidding information receiving means.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A bidding system that receives bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and that receives information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

bidding information receiving means for receiving bidding price information and bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices;

bidding price information sending means for sending bidding price information received by the bidding information receiving means over the communication network to the bid caller;

bidding price information leakage prevention means for preventing ~~the bidding price information received by the bidding information receiving means from letting~~ the operator of

the bidding system from knowing any of the bidding price information received by the bidding information receiving means ~~know~~; and

fee calculating means for calculating a fee based on the bidding price range information received by the bidding information receiving means.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the bidding price range information is information made up of a predetermined price range including the bidding price.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the fee calculation means calculates the fee using a table correlating the bidding price range information with fee information.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the fee calculation means calculates the winning bidding fee based on the winning bidder information and the bidding price range information.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the bidding system further comprises, on a bidder's terminal, means for comparing the bidding price information entered by the bidder with bidding range information, and prompting the bidder reenter a bidding price in case of an inconsistency.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for restricting participation in the bidding if a bidder does not agree to payment of the bidding fee.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for restricting participation in the bidding if a bidder does not enter a method for payment of the bidding fee.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 1, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for confirming a bidder's ability to settle payment, based on a method of payment of the bidding fee entered by the bidder, and means for restricting participation in the bidding if the bidder's ability to settle payment cannot be confirmed with that confirmation means.

Claim 10 (Original): A bidding system that receives bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and that receives information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

shared key receiving means for receiving, over a communication network, a shared key different for each bidder that has been created by the bid caller and stored in an electronic envelope;

shared key sending means for sending, over the communication network, the received shared keys to the bidders;

bidding price information receiving means for receiving, over the communication network, bidding price information that has been encrypted with a shared key sent by the shared key sending means; and

bidding price information sending means for sending, over the communication network, bidding price information that has been received by the bidding price information receiving means to the bid caller.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A bidding method for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

a bidding information receiving step of receiving bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices; and

a fee calculating step of calculating a fee based on the bidding price range information received in the bidding information receiving step.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): A bidding method for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

a bidding information receiving step of receiving bidding price information and bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices;

a bidding price information sending step of sending received bidding price information over the communication network to the bid caller;

a bidding price information leakage prevention step of preventing any of the received bidding price information from becoming known to the operator of the bidding system; and

a fee calculating step of calculating a fee based on the received bidding price range information.

Claim 13 (Original): A bidding method that for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, comprising:

a shared key receiving step of receiving, over a communication network, a shared key different for each bidder that has been created by the bid caller and stored in an electronic envelope;

a shared key sending step of sending, over the communication network, the received shared keys to the bidders;

a bidding price information receiving step of receiving, over the communication network, bidding price information that has been encrypted with a shared key; and

a bidding price information sending step of sending, over the communication network, the received encrypted bidding price information to the bid caller.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): A storage medium storing a bidding program for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, the bidding program performing on a computer:

a bidding information receiving step of receiving bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices; and

a fee calculating step of calculating a fee based on the bidding price range information received in the bidding information receiving step.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A storage medium storing a bidding program for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, the bidding program performing on a computer:

a bidding information receiving step of receiving bidding price information and bidding price range information sent by a bidder over a communication network, said bidding price range information including a plurality of bid prices;

a bidding price information sending step of sending received bidding price information over the communication network to the bid caller;

a bidding price information leakage prevention step of preventing any of the received bidding price information from becoming known to the operator of the bidding system; and

a fee calculating step of calculating a fee based on the received bidding price range information.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): A storage medium storing a bidding program for receiving bids from bidders by disclosing call-for-bid information that has been received from a bid caller calling for bids, and receiving information about a winning bidder determined by the bid caller based on that bidding information, the bidding program performing on a computer:

a shared key receiving step of receiving, over a communication network, a shared key different for each bidder that has been created by the bid caller and stored in an electronic envelope;

a shared key sending step of sending, over the communication network, the received shared keys to the bidders;

a bidding price information receiving step of receiving, over the communication network, bidding price information that has been encrypted with a shared key; and
a bidding price information sending step of sending, over the communication network, the received encrypted bidding price information to the bid caller.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the bidding price range information is information made up of a predetermined price range including the bidding price.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the fee calculation means calculates the fee using a table correlating the bidding price range information with fee information.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the fee calculation means calculates the winning bidding fee based on the winning bidder information and the bidding price range information.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the bidding system further comprises, on a bidder's terminal, means for comparing the bidding price information entered by the bidder with bidding range information, and prompting the bidder reenter a bidding price in case of an inconsistency.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for restricting participation in the bidding if a bidder does not agree to payment of the bidding fee.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for restricting participation in the bidding if a bidder does not enter a method for payment of the bidding fee.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The bidding system according to claim 2, wherein the bidding system further comprises means for confirming a bidder's ability to settle payment, based on a method of payment of the bidding fee entered by the bidder, and means for restricting participation in the bidding if the bidder's ability to settle payment cannot be confirmed with that confirmation means.